



A Go-Slow EHR Approach

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An electronic records system is paying for itself in benefits at a surgical group practice that gradually phased out paper and phased in automation.

Western Surgical Group began implementing an electronic health records system from Greenway Medical Technologies Inc., Carrollton, Ga., in January 2006, a few months after installing a practice management system from the vendor.

- Major sources of savings from the EHRs for the 13-surgeon practice in Reno, Nev., have included:
 - Trimming 10 positions, including medical records and front desk staff, at an annual savings of \$250,000
 - Eliminating the need to spend about \$6,000 per month on transcription;
 - Ending the rental of 2,200 square feet of office space for paper record storage to save \$4,500 per month.

Getting most of the surgeons who co-own the practice to buy into the concept of electronic records was relatively easy because the physicians are technology savvy, says Jim LaBorde, CEO of the practice. "They always like the latest and greatest on the surgery side and the technology side of the practice," he says.

The physicians and staff at the practice's two locations liked the idea of buying an integrated practice management and electronic health records system from one vendor to ease the flow of information, he says.

But actually implementing the system was easy for some and difficult for others, the CEO acknowledges.

To read a case study on the practice's strategy from Health Data Management's February 2009 issue, [click here](http://www.healthdatamanagement.com/issues/2009_61/27638-1.html).

--Howard Anderson

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